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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 005162

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/30/2025

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: SHIA ISLAMIST FADHILA LEADER THROWING HIS HAT IN THE RING TOO

Classified By: POL COUNS ROBERT FORD, REASON 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) Fadhila Party members Muhammad Ismail al-Khzali and Hassan al-Shimry told PolCouns and PolOff December 30 that Dr. Nadeem al-Jabiri, the party's Secretary General, is one of four candidates for Prime

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Minister within the Shia Alliance ? the others being PM Jafari, VP Abdel Mehdi, and TNA Deputy Speaker Shahristani. They anticipated that deciding who the Shia Coalition prime minister candidate would be could take weeks still. Prime Minister Jafari has strong Dawa and Sadr support, they asserted. By contrast, SCIRI backs Adil Abdel Mehdi. Al-Shimry later told PolFSN that Fadhila is dissatisfied with PM Jafari and his performance but Dawa and Sadr won't accept Abdel Mehdi. If there is a real deadlock, the two Fadhila leaders guessed that SCIRI may accept al-Jabiri as PM. They characterized Dr. Hussein Shahristani's candidacy as weak, opining that he may withdraw his name soon.

¶2. (C) Al-Khzali and Al-Shimry agreed with the assessment that the next government needs to be inclusive and include ministers that are chosen for their experience and competence, and not on the basis of the political spoils system. They said Fadhila supports the idea of a national unity government with an open door to all parties. They cited al-Jabiri's role as a bridge between the Sunni and Shia communities, especially during the Cairo Conference. They added that they do not close the door on discussions, "even with Dr. Allawi." They reminded us that Jabiri had attended the conference at which Allawi's Patriotic List was established in October.

¶3. (C) Al-Khzali and Al-Shimry said that security and economic investment would be top priorities for an al-Jabiri-led government. PolCouns stressed the importance to the Sunni Arabs of the issues of detainees and the actions of the security forces. The two Fadhila members defended the leadership of the security forces, saying that many of the incidents are the result of low-level officers and men acting without orders. They blamed the mindset inherited from Saddam, saying that additional training is required to change it. They also warned of "penetrations" of the security services posing a major threat to security. (Comment: They were obviously referring to alleged Baathist penetrations. End Comment.) They did acknowledge the presence of militias, but said that the reasons why they exist -- insecurity in neighborhoods and unemployment -- must be addressed to solve the militia problem.

¶4. (C) Comment: What a difference two months make. In November, Fadhila's dissatisfaction with their position in the Shia Coalition fueled a public desire to leave the Coalition. Now, given the intense competition between PM Jafari and VP Abdel Mehdi, Nadeem al-Jabiri might be seen as a viable alternative and be the next Prime Minister. Certainly Abdel Mehdi supporters had counted on Fadhila party support, and if that proves false, Abdel Mehdi's candidacy will suffer a real blow. We sense there is still much horse-trading ahead, but already the competition inside the Shia Coalition is hard and getting harder.

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